

A Serial of Instruction Inviting Grave Research. No. 4.

Under circumstances previously related, you could not but expect that at least a remnant of your number would rise to the occasion and call a halt. As you are well aware a number did so, and labored for years with commendable zeal to overthrow the idolatrous tendency of creed worship. At the same time another class rose up and declared for a retreat to still more ancient date, and there erect permanent and immovable quarters for all time. You refused to accede to either party, and as a result the Old Order brethren seceded from your body and continued loyal to the advice and decisions that were in force a quarter of a century previous. You expelled them in a body for adhering to the very advice you formerly forced upon them, and to exemplify your accelerated piety derived from more recent legislation, robbed them of their share in church property, invoking the aid of the civil law you positively advised as wrong and contrary to the Gospel and order of the church, no less than fourteen times between 1810 and 1862. Finally, about the year 1880, a scheme was projected to expel a number of the leaders who persisted in teaching and advocating the identical doctrine that was revived from apostolic times at Schwartzenau in 1708, viz: that "the Gospel, and it alone, is an all-sufficient rule of faith and practice" to insure salvation. This was to be done at the earliest convenient moment a warrantable pretext presented itself for the act.

The work began in 1881 by sending a committee to Berlin, Pa., to try H. R. Holsinger for transgressions committed against annual meeting. Said committee met with the Berlin congregation and discussed the propriety of allowing a mixed audience to be present at the trial, and allowing a stenographer to be present to report the proceedings for reference and publication. After two days discussion and without a single reference to the specific charges of transgression, your committee fortified itself behind a declaration the Berlin church made relative to assuming a certain responsibility, which deserves special ventilation.

John Wise, foreman, said at the beginning of that mock trial, "We are here as a committee appointed, by annual meeting, to come to the Berlin church and investigate brother Holsinger's case." This, then, was said committee's self-stated authorized duty. Enoch Eby said, "The charges that stand against brother Henry now, are for publishing through the press that which is in direct opposition to the *usages* and *order* of the church." Mark the language. Here we have the *duties* of the committee and Holsinger's "transgression" out of the committee's own mouth, but not the specific charges. As before stated, the specific charges were not made, and the trial embraced in the committee's duties was not even commenced. The discussion was wholly related to an open trial and stenographic report—the preliminaries of a trial. Holsinger finally gave the committee privilege to dismiss all disinterested spectators, which narrowed all countervailing obstacles down to the reporter. Thus the first day closed, but, be it remembered, the committee would not accept of the privilege to dismiss all visitors. Now comes the mooted "responsibility" upon which Holsinger was expelled. How was it understood by the church, and how cunningly did the foreman of that committee trick that assembly? E. J. Meyers said, "The church has taken upon its shoulders the *responsibility* of the report." Kauffman, one of the committee, said, "If you want an open council here, the church must be responsible." The following morning, after plenty of time for concocting the trick, John Wise, foreman, said, "We understand that the congregation have taken upon themselves the entire responsibility of *departing from the usages of the church*." He knew what the church considered as the "responsibility," from the remarks of E. J. Meyers; and the church felt that it knew what said "responsibility" embraced, from the remarks of committeeman Kauffman, as before quoted. Wise now said, "We (the committee) stand free from any further investigation in this matter" (all supposing he referred to investigating further the question of open council and reporter, which was the only issue thus far). As that matter now seemed settled, the church

having agreed to resume the responsibility—of having a reporter and an open council,—Holsinger then said, "I presume, brother Moderator, it will be on you part to carry on the business." Wise then intimated that he thought the church did not understand the responsibility it was assuming, and gave them a few moments for consideration, but no explanation whatever. Holsinger then explained in German and English that the church had assumed the "responsibility" of an open council and a full report of its proceedings, giving the church the privilege of rescinding its position. The church did not rescind.

Wise now says, "We (the committee) now propose to withdraw and prepare our report." The church was astounded at this declaration, for every one expected the trial *now to commence*. Even committeeman Quinter, in surprise, exclaimed: "Then you (John Wise,) don't give them the privilege of assuming the 'responsibility?' I don't think I fully understand?" Wise then made desultory remarks, jumbling irrelevant sentences together and closed by saying, "We don't propose to become guilty of any departure from '*these usages*.' The 'responsibility' rests with the church." (The responsibility of an open council and stenographer is what all understood.)

Holsinger explained: "The understanding yesterday was, that the committee would throw the responsibility (of an open council) on the church and then proceed with the business. But this morning we understand that the committee are going to put on their hats and get away if we do not reconsider that action." He further said, "We will not take the responsibility of breaking up the committee."

Wise, instead of making one single explanation that would enlighten the church as to what he was adroitly manœuvring to accomplish, still continued his irrelevant remarks, thus: "We are here, as I said, to represent the general Brotherhood. You stand upon your own responsibility and you cannot shift the responsibility upon the committee."

After further remarks, and the audacity of asking for donations to pay the committee's expenses to Berlin church, they retired and brought in a report of which the following is an extract: "Met at 9 a. m. according to adjournment. The chairman announced to the meeting that the committee feared the members did not understand the responsibilities they assumed yesterday, and proposed a reconsideration," &c.

The atrocious treachery on the part of the foreman and others of the committee that did understand the responsibility they were foisting illogically upon that unsuspecting church, consists in the fact that they never once sought to make the matter clear to the church. They did not even give a hint. That committee knew the Berlin church did not and could not understand their responsibility to extend beyond the open council and report; neither did that committee attempt to enlighten the church as to the construction it intended to arbitrarily force upon it when the supreme moment should come. They could not understand their responsibility to embrace more than what was contained in the agreement—the open council and reporter. The church was not dull, but it was honest, and supposed the committee to be honest. Kauffman and Quinter so understood it as their previously quoted remarks clearly imply. The committee knew what the church considered as the extent of their responsibility, from the remarks of Meyers and Holsinger. In the face of all this, subsequent developments have proven conclusively that the foreman, and perhaps others of the committee, intended at a critical moment, to thrust upon them a responsibility they never assumed. The foreman's motives were concealed behind irrelevant remarks that threw no light whatever upon his real intention, but which could *afterwards* be constructed into a meaning the church could not possibly comprehend until after the committee had accomplished the end it sought from the beginning.

That committee, knowing that the church had assumed clearly and specifically the responsibility, holding an open trial with a reporter, simply this and no more, forced, illogically, unfairly, and

treacherously, upon them what they never agreed to assume and the committee knew it. It was dishonest. It was a trick, and more bold than ingenious, at that. Reading the stenographic report of that council to day, and the trickery practiced upon that church, is appalling. A word, a hint, even, would have enlightened the church as to the fraud in waiting for them, but it was not given, for the very good reason that an end was in process of attainment regardless of the crudest and lowest forms, even, of justice, truth and honesty.

The real object was kept from the Berlin church, and the seemingly concerned condition of the committee, relative to "fears that the church did not understand the responsibility it had assumed," was only for a shadow of defense when the monstrous work should be exposed. If they had such fears why did they not explain? Why did they not explain their view of the responsibility the church had assumed? All that the foreman said on the subject prior to bringing in the final report and departing from Berlin without the manners to thank sister Holsinger for feeding them, was as unmeaning and irrelevant to the point at issue as would be "Washington's farewell address." It was so intended. It was an essential part of the scheme. The record is at hand, read it for yourself.

Continuing the report, "and inasmuch as brother H. R. Holsinger and the Berlin church assumed all responsibility in the case, therefore we decided that brother H. R. Holsinger cannot be held in fellowship," &c.

"All responsibility in the case." They had done no such thing and John Wise knew it. It was a deliberately planned falsehood. The case had never been mentioned; it had not yet been reached. The church and H. R. Holsinger had only assumed the responsibility of any open council and a stenographer, preparatory to beginning the case. This is your record. In politics it would be called wanton corruption; in a court of justice it would be scorned by all honorable men. It stands as one of the few colossal breaches of moral trust that stand most conspicuous upon the history of ecclesiastical turpitude.

Who will say that Holsinger had a trial? Who will say that the Berlin church was not tricked? And yet Holsinger was expelled thus, and the stain of injustice riveted upon his persecutors and will remain thus until death. If such men were in charge of the worldly governments, anarchy would reign supreme; but they would not remain there long.

This report was taken to the annual meeting of 1882, and there ratified, not because it was just, not because it was according to instructions, but because the committee men were prominent and it would not do to censure them. It would have shown weakness on the part of that body that presumes to enact mandates, to find a committee of its most prominent men so culpable. I will venture the assertion that whatever report that committee might have made, no difference what, just so it expelled Holsinger, it would have been ratified. Such men as Workman, D. C. Moomaw, and a host of others, that declared publicly and privately that they would not recognize the committee's decision, did so, however, with a gusto as soon as they saw which way the crowd went, and have been the most unreasonable and malignant persecutors of those that stood with them from the time of the Berlin farce until annual meeting of 1882, but afterwards did not go with them over into a treacherous recantation of their former convictions and declarations. Honesty, demanded fidelity to principle; popularity demanded affinity for the crowd, and right here, many identical sentiments previous to the annual meeting of 1882, separated immediately after; the one party calling the other rebels. But what could be expected from those who could make the report alluded to in this review, and what better thing could be looked for from those who could ratify it.

I have dwelt thus lengthily upon this business because it involved a great principle. To sustain it required a sacrifice of honorable manhood from a moral standpoint, and treason against the Gospel, our fathers' creed, from a religious standpoint.

(To be continued.)